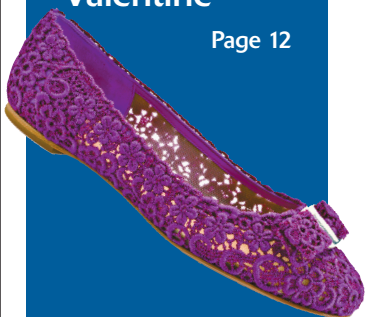


Gifts for your
Valentine

Page 12



Taiwanese film returns



Director Wei Te-Sheng and his crew had much to celebrate when *Seediq Bale*, their aborigine epic, won Best Feature at the Golden Horse Awards ceremony last November.

After a decade-long slump, Taiwan's films are sweeping box offices both home and abroad. The success owes much to a new generation of filmmakers who are bringing fresh hope to the industry.

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Sportswear
makers fight
for 2012

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Challenging
films show
poet's heart

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Polo players
take to snow

The nine-day
Fortune Heights
Snow Polo World
Cup is in China for
the first time.



Pricey restaurants damage island's image



The Fulin seafood restaurant in Sanya was closed for ripping off customers this week.

Sun Qing/CFP Photo

By Zhao Hongyi

Spring Festival is the biggest holiday in China and a time when the nation's tourist destinations find themselves fully booked.

But this year, the charm of the seasonal getaway was smashed by rampant price gouging that experts warn could cripple the future appeal of many such destinations.

Hainan Province, China's most popular island getaway, came under heavy criticism at the end of January after tourists reported having been victimized by restaurants, hotels and scenic venues.

"The three of us – myself, my wife and our daughter – ordered three common seafood dishes at a restaurant and were charged nearly 4,000 yuan!" Rodie, a Beijing resident who spent his holiday in the island's southernmost city of Sanya, wrote on his microblog.

"When one group of four men from Harbin that we saw asked the price of a fish in the restaurant's tank, the fishmonger took one out, killed it and weighed it. Only after that did he say the fish was 1,160 yuan per kilogram and that its total price was more than 6,000 yuan," Rodie wrote.

"The men were forced to pay even though they were being charged 100 times the real price."

A respondent to Rodie's post said that he and his friends were forced to pay nearly 10,000 yuan for seven dishes at a Sanya restaurant.

Local media in Sanya rebuffed the reports for being posted under microblog aliases and dared accusers to make

their claims public.

But Sanya was not the only city where restaurants were ruining holidays.

Ding Hai, from Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, took his family on a tour of Xiamen, Fujian Province for the festival. Ding invited his friends on the island out to dinner at a restaurant on February 3, where they ordered five dishes and a soup.

"Only three of the dishes were seafood and one was a 'free gift' from the restaurant," Ding said on his microblog. "The bill came to 9,560 yuan – a dozen times higher than I expected!"

Ding complained to the local consumer protection agency, and days later the restaurant was closed by a Xiamen business watchdog for rectification.

Such stories were not limited to restaurants. Holiday tourists reported price gouging by supermarkets, travel agencies, hotels, taxis and vendors.

"Tourists are here for only for a few days," a local vendor surnamed Ruan in Sanya told local media. "We cannot let an opportunity [to overcharge them] pass us by – especially during Spring Festival holiday."

The Sanya government denied having received even one complaint during the holiday period.

Following media coverage of the dissatisfied travelers, it "adjusted" its claim, stating it received only 70 complaints about food safety and none of dishonest business practices.

Several days later, the Sanya government canceled the business license of the restaurant Rodie complained about on his microblog.

Hainan Island was formerly a part

of Guangdong Province. In 1988, the central government split off the island as an independent province. With its tropical climate and famous scenery, the island quickly earned a reputation as "China's Hawaii."

The island is the perennial site of the Bo'an International Affairs Forum and one of the world's largest duty-free shopping malls, opened during 2011.

Xiamen is adjacent to Taiwan and is regarded as the forefront base for reunification. It is also one of the four special economic zones China opened in the late 1970s prior to nationwide economic reforms.

Dishonest business practices were also reported in tourist destinations like Lijiang and Shangri-la, Yunnan Province.

A group of tourists from Guangdong Province were forced to purchase 400 kilograms of aweto, an herbal medicine, for more than 10,000 yuan, according to the reports from media outlets in Yunnan Province.

"It's not a problem that will be solved through punishment," said Wang Jianmin, a research fellow at the Tourism Research Center under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Wang urged local officials to resolve these problems as soon as possible if they expect to continue to attract tourists.

"We can learn from many successful tourist destinations such as Hawaii and most of Southeast Asia," he said.

But clear regulations that are actually enforced may be necessary to control the market and ensure the sustainable growth of the tourism market, Wang said.

Brief

Ultimatum for microblog users

Microblog users in Beijing who do not tie their real names to their accounts by mid-March will be banned from posting comments, a local official said Wednesday.

The capital recently ordered users of microblogs to register using their real names, making it easier for authorities to track those who post materials that officials deem illegal.

A Beijing government spokesperson surnamed Tian said that as of March 16, those who fail to register with their real names will be banned from posting or forwarding comments.

Xinhua reported that users who fail to comply will not be completely banned from the microblog services – they will still be able to follow other users and read messages.

Hong Kong battles 'pregnancy tourism'

A full-page ad opposing the flood of pregnant women arriving from the Chinese mainland to give birth in Hong Kong was published in a local newspaper last week.

The ad is reportedly funded by Internet users in Hong Kong, who have set up a Facebook group to oppose pregnant mainlanders who choose to have their babies in Hong Kong.

The ad shows a picture of a locust crawling on top of Hong Kong's Lion Mountain with the headline, "Are you willing to see Hong Kong spend HK\$1 million every 18 minutes to bring up children whose parents are not from Hong Kong?"

The ad calls on the government to enact legislation that would stem the flow of pregnant women.

Many Hong Kong netizens supported the ad, saying it is not excluding outsiders. But some from the Chinese mainland expressed anger, saying it is a stunning example of discrimination.

An online poll found that 60 percent of mainland respondents understood Hong Kong's frustration, though 20 percent accused Hong Kong residents of "lacking tolerance."

(Agencies)

Fighting for 2012

Li Ning slashes staff to compete in sportswear market

By Huang Daohen

The Year of the Dragon may yet hold promise for the country's apparel industry: the market snatched \$110 billion in 2009 and is expected to grow to \$200 billion by 2014.

But reaching that goal won't be easy.

Rising wages, increasing material costs and bigger cuts being taken by the distributors are becoming a headache for both local and global sportswear labels. In 2012, the nation's second- and third-tier cities will become the new battleground.



Li Ning hopes downsizing will make it more capable of competing with Nike and Adidas.

Wen Lei/IC Photo

Chen Jiakai recently treated himself to a pair of Nike athletic shoes branded for his favorite NBA basketball player: Kobe Bryant.

It was an extravagant gift for a new middle school teacher in Wenzhou, a city of 9 million in Zhejiang Province. The 23-year-old paid nearly three times what he would have paid for a similar domestic brand.

But Chen said he would not have considered leading domestic brands like Li Ning or Peak.

"In Wenzhou, you have to pay attention to what others say about you," Chen said. "If you choose something like Li Ning, Peak or Anta, people will think, 'Well, this kid is not rich enough to afford Nike and Adidas.'"

The trend is evidenced by statistics from the Beijing-based consulting firm Oriental Securities.

As of late 2010, Nike was the leading sportswear label in the country, with 16 percent of the market share. Adidas, another major overseas sportswear brand, came in second at 13 percent. Domestic sportswear makers Li Ning and Anta took 10 and 8 percent respectively.

Chen is part of a growing number of consumers who are choosing foreign sportswear brands. Lee Lin, a 29-year-old IT engineer in Beijing, shared the same idea. Lee's casual wear is from Adidas and Puma, and he too would never think of buying a domestic brand.

"There is a shift taking place right now in consumption as you have more and more Chinese consumers trading up, wanting to go to known international brands," said Wen Yijun, an analyst with Oriental Securities in Beijing.

The consulting agency predicted continued growth for Nike in China and expected a 10 percent gain in Nike shares this year.

The management of the world's sportswear giant clearly knows this.

In 2010, Nike announced that its new marketing strategy for the Chinese mainland involved moving into lower-tier cities to compete with domestic

brands and appeal to more consumers.

Charlie Denson, president of Nike, said in a previous interview with Bloomberg News that the company would launch a range of low-priced products in second- and third-tier cities rather than focusing on high-end buyers in big cities.

Wen said the launch of low-priced products was expected.

The first batch of low-priced Nike products reportedly includes sports shoes retailing for 300 yuan – significantly lower than Nike's normal prices in China.

According to Oriental Securities, sports shoes priced between 150 and 250 yuan are the best sellers in second- and third-tier cities.

Currently, most Nike sports shoes in the country cost around 1,000 yuan. Even for an ordinary office worker in Beijing, one pair of Nike shoes means spending a significant amount of his other monthly salary.

"If the company insists on maintaining its high-price marketing strategy, it would mean yielding the world's most promising market to the domestic rivals Li Ning and Anta," he said.

In Nike's five-year plan, the company adjusted its marketing strategy to win over potential consumers in smaller cities, aiming for a 10 percent increase in year-on-year in sales in the Chinese mainland market, which now accounts for 9 percent of the sportswear maker's worldwide share.

A similar drive is being undertaken by Adidas. The company said it would maintain its strong development by spreading its lower-priced products across the country.

Experts worried that the low-priced product policy by Nike and Adidas will seriously affect domestic brands such as Li Ning and Anta.

Their fears were completely correct.

Li Ning announced that it will slash employment rolls to reduce costs after its sales revenue fell 7 percent in 2011.

The company, founded by gymnast

Li Ning, said Friday on its website that it would "streamline the organizational structure" of various departments – meaning heavy cuts for its employees engaged in human resources, information technology and strategic development.

Demi Luo, head of Li Ning's public relations, said the company plans to reduce its human resources costs as a percentage of its sales by 0.5 percent this year. The company's human resources costs as a percentage of its sales was 8.7 percent in the first half of 2011.

Beijing Youth Daily reported that Li Ning paid 710 million yuan in wages to its 4,200 employees last year. Each employee earned an average of 168,500 yuan per year, which is 50 percent more than employees at Anta and Peak.

Zhang Zhiyong, CEO of Li Ning, said the adjustment will be beneficial to the group's long-term development.

Li Ning's shares in Hong Kong fell 5.3 percent on Monday by closing.

Wen said Li Ning's cuts would be unlikely to boost short-term sales. "The industry is suffering from last year's increases in resource, rent and labor costs," he said.

"Worse still, some sports brands made poor evaluations of the market, causing them to end up with warehouses full of unsold products," Wen said.

Like Li Ning, most domestic sportswear brands had large inventories, and clearing old inventory will be a major task for 2012.

"Anticipating the difficulties of accelerating inflation and costs is essential to staying a strong player in the country's booming apparel market," he said.

But while Nike and Adidas might have won consumers like 23-year-old middle school teacher Chen by moving downwards to smaller inland cities, Wen said it would be a mistake to underestimate the progress that Li Ning and Anta have made.

"Domestic brands will always stay competitive thanks to their investments in branding, research and development," he said.

Brief

Hongqi cars as state vehicles

Ill-fated Hongqi Automobile is expected to make a comeback through a new policy that will make Hongqi cars official state vehicles.

Hongqi sedans produced by FAW Group will reportedly become provincial or ministerial level leaders' official vehicle soon. The company hasn't commented on the news but said Hongqi products meet the standards of government procurement.

Since last year, the official vehicle procurement standards have increasingly tilted to domestic brands, with the general cost standard for a public vehicle lowered from 250,000 yuan to 180,000 yuan or less, which seems tailor-made for domestic vehicle brands.

Now all signs point to Hongqi being designated the official vehicle for party leaders.

Hongqi was the country's first domestic vehicle brand and was the vehicle of senior leadership. In National Day parades, party and military leadership all rode Hongqi vehicles to review troops.

However, Hongqi has hit several rough spots. According to FAW, the only Hongqi model currently sold on the market is 2008's Prime series, and the sales volume of Hongqi since August 2011 has been zero.

Google Maps still waiting for approval

The government is still reviewing Google's application for an online map service permit and will suspend the operation of online map services that failed to apply for the permit by February 1.

The National Administration of Surveying, Mapping and Geo-information has already issued permits to 279 online mapping companies. The authorities issued a notice last December to order all online map service providers to apply for a permit.

According to the bureau, 151 companies across the country have received class-A permits, which allow them to offer map search, map locator, downloads and other functions to their users, while 128 map companies were granted lower-grade class-B permits.

Google applied for the permit last year through its joint-venture Beijing Guxiang Information Technology. The Chinese mapping administration is currently reviewing Google and seven other maps service providers. These companies are allowed to continue their operations but are not able to add any new content until being approved.

(Agencies)

Expats infuse Chinese folk songs with personal interpretation

By Wu Hao

Two months ago, a music video appeared on Youku called "A Foreigner in Beijing," showing an expat's embrace of both traditional and modern parts of Beijing. It quickly went viral.

It wasn't the first time that Andong, the singing foreigner in the video, won the hearts of Chinese viewers through songs.

And he isn't alone.

Despite all that globalization has done for Beijing and China, locals still seem fascinated by foreigners who speak excellent Chinese. They also wonder: what is it about Chinese folk songs—especially the "red" tunes that seem outdated to locals—that attract these singers?



Mark Levine

Photo provided by Mark Levine



Martin Papp participating in a TV show

Singing Chinese songs as a career

"I'd go nowhere except China, I'd do nothing except sing," Martin Papp, a music enthusiast from Colorado, wrote on his Douban page.

Papp fell in love with China when he was an exchange student in Shanghai.

"I played guitar in Shanghai and many Chinese students encouraged me to continue playing music, so when I graduated from college I decided to come back to China and keep performing," Papp said.

The first time Papp learned about red songs was after

seeing people dressed up in military outfits singing on TV, something he had never seen before. Finding it fresh, Papp's singing journey began.

He ranked among the top 30 in *Kuaile Nansheng* – China's equivalent of *American Idol* – but his fame skyrocketed when he appeared on BTV's Spring Festival Gala to perform a modernized, hip-hop version of the song "Yingshanhong."

By giving traditional songs a modern twist, Papp "wanted young people to enjoy those songs but still sing something very true and close to Chinese culture."

During this year's Spring Festival, Papp showed up at several galas with his partners Weili and Kesen, who are also expats living in China.

"[The fans] chasing me after the show, the feeling was really unique," Papp told *China Daily*.

"Red song is a way to respect China and its history. They are similar to other countries' patriotic songs," he said. "They still apply today because they remind us of where we came from."

Papp has decided to make a career out of singing Chinese songs. "The Chinese enter-

tainment industry will be one of the biggest entertainment industries in the world within the next 10 years," he said.

Papp's band, Martin's Crosswalk, will release new original songs in the form of a short movie series at the end of this month.

"My future plan is to prepare my own album this year and become a major artist in China," he said.

The message behind red songs still apply today

Mark Levine, a talkative 64-year-old who dresses up like a cowboy in his shows, began learning to play the guitar when he was just nine years old.

Unlike Papp's rapping of Chinese songs, Levine gives red tunes a country twang.

Before arriving in China, Levine was a college teacher of sociology and full-time volunteer for 29 years in the US.

Huai'an was his first destination in China, inspiring him to write the song "Huai'an –

Promise of the Future."

Then he began making an album, with lyrics such as "Dare to struggle, dare to win" and "serve the people" – Mao's famous words.

"The ideas still apply today," he said. "They are just presented as history or as something important to know rather than something that's important, because [we should] figure out how do we apply these ideas."

"We shouldn't abandon the ideas, just modify them."

Levine came to China with the hope of providing a better perspective about the US and showing Chinese people what it means to be a long-time volunteer.

"I'm trying to follow your example," one of his students working as a volunteer teacher in Inner Mongolia said to him.

Levine is currently writing a book called *Stories from a Life in China*, and he's also in the process of learning more Chinese folk songs.

"I'll be in China for as long as I'm welcome," he said.

Dickens' birthday celebration awakens young writers

By Wu Tong

The Cultural and Education Section of the British Embassy held a ceremony on February 7 to celebrate the 200th birthday of Charles Dickens, presenting awards to a series of activity winners.

"We gather here tonight to commemorate a very special figure in UK's history of literature and indeed global literature – Charles Dickens," Chris Wood, the deputy ambassador of the British Embassy, said in opening remarks.

Tie Ning, the chairman of Chinese Writers Associations, expressed her admiration.

"The first Dickens novel I read was *David Copperfield*," she said. "His characters are always full of humanity, struggling in the lower classes of society, making readers feel pity for their miserable lives."

She said Dickens' keen observation skills made him special, and made his characters resonate with readers. "The works of Dickens stand the test of time. His success and talent are definitely beyond borders."

The British Embassy initiated a series of activities last September for the event, including Our Times – the Creative Writing and Documentary Photography Competition, Teaching Plan Competition and a Dickens culture salon.

The writing and documentary photography contest drew more than 3,000 con-



Chris Wood presents an award to a winner as part of the British Embassy's celebration of Charles Dickens' 200th birthday.

testants all around the country, ranging from professional writers and photographers to high school students.

“We asked young writers to capture moments, places and characters in their cities through creative writing,” Wood said. “We hope that our events around Dickens can inspire and encourage generations of Chinese writers to be as successful as Dickens.”

One of the winners was Feng Simin, a college freshman. "I used to be a shy girl lacking confidence," she said. "Although writing was one of my hobbies, before the competition, I never thought I

could do something with it."

Feng's work is based on one of her volunteer experiences in which she helped an infant on the train. She said she wrote the story as a response to society's apathy.

"Dickens' stories inspired me a lot," she said. "I hope my work can shine like his and extend warmth to others."

Lu Jiande, the director of the institute of literature of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and also a competition judge, praised the entries.

“Although many of our contestants are still quite young, they know much about

Dickens' works," Lu said. "Many of them adapted the famous opening line of *A Tale of Two Cities* to start their story."

Lu was also impressed with the vitality and social responsibility displayed by the contestants. "Unlike my generation, they are more optimistic about the future and determined about what they can and should do to change society."

In many people's opinion, Chinese literature has also been in the winter of despair in recent years. Many rue the decrease of literature experts, while others believe that liter-

ature is no longer suitable in this day and age.

But Lu believes in the future of Chinese literature. He said it is becoming more diversified than before, which is a positive sign for its revival. "People are more willing to think than before, especially to think critically," Lu said. "I think that is the foundation of writing."

Lu also said the competition is not just about celebrating Dickens, but also an opportunity to discover young writers. "When we read Dickens, we always feel the humanity despite the darkness of the society. And I believe that this vital young generation possesses that same spirit."

To mark the bicentennial of Dickens' birth, celebrations under the banner "Dickens 2012" were held in more than 50 countries. Exhibitions were opened in Portsmouth, Dickens' birthplace. BBC reproduced one of Dickens' greatest works for TV, *Great Expectations*.

The British Embassy screened films based on Dickens in Beijing, Dalian and Xi'an. Literature salons were also held in Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Wuhan, Chengdu and Changsha. Thirteen renowned authors including Mo Yan, Liu Zhenyun, Murong Xuecun, Ye Xin and Alai have been invited to talk with literature fans on different aspects of literature and discuss the realistic meaning of great books.

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Asia's biggest snow polo tournament winds down

By Han Manman

The royal sport of polo, once popular in China during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), is going through a renaissance in China with Asia's first-ever Snow Polo World Cup, which began last weekend at the Tianjin Golden Metropolitan Polo Club, China's newest and largest polo club.

Hosted by the Equestrian Association of China and the Federation of International Polo (FIP), the nine-day event called "Fortune Heights Snow Polo World Cup" is one of the world's largest snow polo tournaments, and the first to take place in China.

The tournament attracted 12 teams, all part of FIP, representing countries such as Argentina, Australia, Brazil, England, France and the US.

After three rounds of play, the playoffs begin this weekend.

Snow polo originated in the Swiss winter resort of St. Moritz in 1960, with some calling it the pinnacle of polo because of its spectacle. The game is played by two teams of three using an orange ball slightly bigger than the average polo ball.

Although polo was once popular with China's gentry during the Tang Dynasty, the "sport of kings" died out in China almost entirely until a group of expats brought it back in recent years by setting up polo clubs.

Paul Stevens, general manager of Tianjin's Metropolitan Polo Club, and his family have been involved in the management of Britain's premier polo institution for more than 50 years. He believes China has the ingredients to become a new frontier for polo.



China is hosting the Snow Polo World Cup for the first time.

Photo provided by Fiona

"There is now a second generation of rich Chinese who are well educated and real enthusiasts for actually doing things," Stevens said. "One of those things will be polo."

Tianjin's Metropolitan Polo Club is one of several around the world that turn to snow polo to give their sport year-round appeal. Steven said while the club's equestrian and polo facilities are reserved for club members only, this kind of international tournament provides an opportunity

for the general public to get close to the sport.

For more information about the tournament, visit snowpoloworldcup.com.

When: Gate opens at 11 am every day until Sunday

Match time: 1-4 pm

Address: 16 Haitai Huakeju Lu, Binhai Gaoxin Qu, Tianjin

Tel: 022-2372 8877

Email:

vip@snowpoloworldcup.com

Event

Websites that Chinese youth use every day

This workshop, designed for advanced Mandarin speakers, is for those who want further insight into Chinese culture and to practice their Chinese at the same time. Monday evening's workshop will help you understand where online trends start, what websites are the most attractive to the young people of China, and why.

Where: Culture Yard, 10 Shique Hutong, Dongcheng District

When: February 13, 7-8:40 pm

Tel: 8404 4166

Cost: 75 yuan

Consultation lecture for choosing international schools

Which international school in Beijing is best for my child? IB, A-level, AP – which curriculum is most suitable? How many international schools are open to Chinese student? How does one apply? When is the best time to apply?

Hantong Education will provide information and advice for parents interested in sending their child to an international school.

Where: Room 705, 68 Bei Sihuan Xilu, Left Bank Community, Haidian District

When: February 18

Tel: 85997183

Cost: Free

Beijing Buddies

Help make a difference in the life of a migrant child in this drop-in volunteer project run by Migrant Children's Foundation, which brings together volunteers to give kids time and attention. Volunteers just need to show up at the Guomao subway station, Exit C, at 8:30 am on Saturdays.

When: Every Saturday, 8:30 am – 2 pm

Email: dbateman@mcfchina.org

Cost: Free

(By Han Manman)

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Residents concerned about indoor air quality



Air pollution is a major concern among Beijing residents.

CFP Photo

By Wu Tong

While debate continues over the standard of outdoor air monitoring equipment used by the municipal government, residents are increasingly voicing concerns over indoor pollution.

Zhao Fangyu, a software engineer in Beijing, was recently victimized. The new furniture he bought months ago gave him formaldehyde poisoning.

"I had a sore throat first, then a fever," he said. "Not until I ran an indoor air quality test did I realize that it was formaldehyde that was making me sick."

Zhao's experience is not unique. As home decoration becomes popular, consumers are being exposed to higher

health risks. So far, the number of deaths related to indoor air pollution in China is about 111,000 per year, according to the national health bureau.

Chemical substances carried by furniture and paint can be lethal. "Pollutants like formaldehyde, radon and benzene are quite common aspects of indoor air pollution," said Hao Xinbao, a hematologist in Hainan Affiliated Hospital.

He pointed out that chronic respiratory disease, memory loss, nausea, respiratory failure and leukemia can all develop as a result of prolonged exposure to these chemical elements.

Hao also said that the effects of indoor air pollution need to be taken more seri-

ously than before since interior decoration is becoming more popular.

"There are many loopholes in the market, which means it's difficult to guarantee the quality of the building materials," Hao said. "To lower risk, consumers need to do indoor air quality tests."

An indoor air quality test is required inside the city for interior decorators. Wu Ju, a 31-year-old marketing executive, has benefited from it.

Wu said months ago he had planned to paint a wall. Since his friends always warned him about the danger of benzene poisoning, he did an indoor air quality test very carefully, which helped him avoid being affected by the pollutants.

Currently, several compa-

nies offer air quality tests, as well as tests for ambient noise and radiation. Prices differ according to the test.

Self-testing indoor living conditions

Before calling professionals, residents can take some basic steps to self-test their living environment:

- Is there always a pungent smell in the room?
- Do residents experience nausea or dizziness every morning?
- Do residents always get colds or suffer symptoms of indoor allergies?
- Are nonsmokers always complaining of sore throats or difficulty in breathing, even in a nonsmoking environment?
- Are plants having a hard time staying alive?

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiy@ynet.com

Do you know where I can sharpen the blades on my kid's hockey skates? I've been to Le Cool Ice Rink in Guomao, but I'm not happy with their work. I asked the skating coaches and they said they sharpen the skates by themselves.

There are a few stands for skate sharpening at Houhai. One stand has a sign that reads Beijing Bingdaowang, meaning "king of Beijing ice skating sharpening." It has a good reputation among local skaters.

I live in Season's Park and I'm looking for a florist who can deliver flowers to my apartment twice a week. I don't need anything overly fancy, just simple fresh flowers twice a week. There is an April's Gourmet in my area, but its fresh flowers are too expensive.

You can easily get fresh flowers delivered to your apartment from flower markets like Laitai or Liangma. Most vendors at Liangma Flower Market charge an extra 20 yuan for delivery. (Liangma Flower Market: 8 Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District; Tel: 6590 6688)

I haven't been in Beijing very long, but I think my roommate may have screwed me over. She charged me 3,500 yuan per month, claiming the apartment cost 7,000 yuan per month. She hasn't allowed me to meet the landlord. But one of my friends in the same neighborhood – who lives in a bigger room than me – said an apartment in our complex shouldn't be more than 6,000 yuan per month. I want to move but I also want to get my deposit. What should I do?

You should be straightforward with her. If she threatens to not return your deposit, you can expose her to the landlord. According to Beijing's renting regulations, subletting without a landlord's permission is illegal. It's also not that difficult to find your landlord, even if your roommate tries to prevent you. Go to the property management office, say there's an emergency in the apartment such as a lost electricity or water bill card and you need the owner's assistance to get a new one. Normally, the property management office has the number of the landlord because he or she is the one who has to pay the management and heating fees every year.

(By Wei Ying)

China intangible cultural heritage protection on display



Traditional technique for making vinegar



Handcraft artists

Before next Wednesday, a free exhibition to promote protection of China's intangible cultural heritage will be staged at Beijing Agriculture Museum. The exhibition covers 133 traditional techniques and handcraft skills.

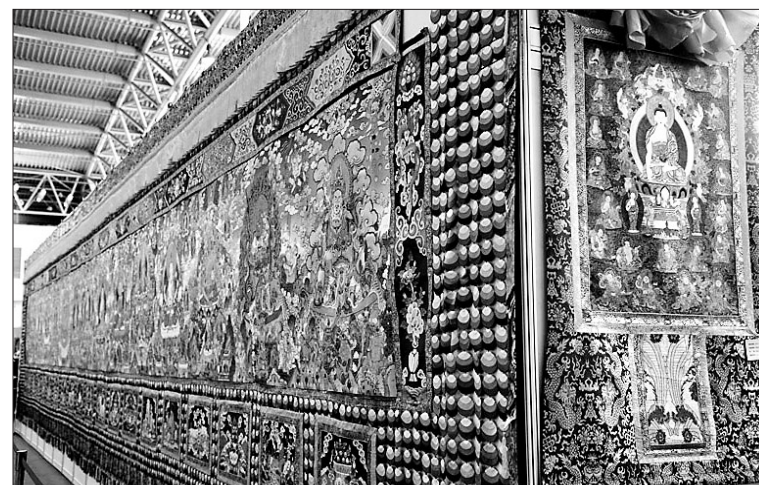
Beijing Agriculture Museum

Where: 16 Dong Sanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 9 am – 7 pm

Tel: 6509 6114

(By Wei Ying)



Tibetan carpet

CFP Photos

End of Taiwan's film slump?

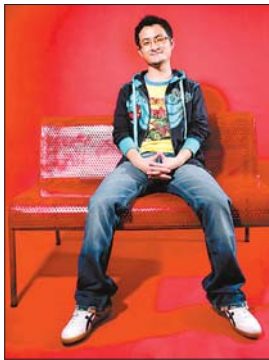
Young directors bring more personal films

By Han Manman

Last year's biggest surprise in the Taiwanese film market was the teen romance *You Are the Apple of My Eye* and generated a buzz on the mainland.

While credited with propelling Taiwanese cinema back to popularity, the

After a decade-long slump, Taiwan's films are sweeping box offices both at home and abroad. A new generation of filmmakers who are bringing hope to the ailing industry.



Director Giddens Ko
Photo provided
by Fengyuxijun



You Are the Apple of My Eye



You Are the Apple of My Eye is a small-budget film and won the Golden Horse Award for Best New Director.

You Are the Apple of My Eye contained an array of romantic elements needed to make viewers relive their sweet high school memories when it premiered on the mainland last month.

The film, based on a semi-autobiographical novel by Taiwanese author Giddens Ko, was Ko's directorial debut.

Apple of My Eye tells the story of five guys. Giddens' character, played by Ke Zhenlong, is a prankster and a mischievous student who strives to win the heart of Shen Jiayi, an honors student who is popular with all the boys in her class.

The film is split into three parts and follows their relationship through high school, university and into adulthood.

The small-budget film was a surprising success in many Asian film markets and has already become Taiwan and Hong Kong's highest-grossing Chinese film.

"The film turns its lens on youthful confusion, rebellion and first love. It's more like a bittersweet romance than a coming-of-age comedy," said Chen Xing, a mainland viewer

who also called it "pop cinema at its finest."

But *Apple of My Eye* is just one among many small-budget productions finding success abroad. Many critics are pointing to the sudden boom as a sign that Taiwan's film slump is over. Cinema was introduced to Taiwan in 1907 by the Japanese filmmaker Takamatsu Toyojiro. However, the films were in Japanese and functioned as propaganda tools for the island's colonial rulers.

By the 1950s, Taiwan began filming movies in Chinese. However, most focused on civic virtue and were set in the countryside.

In the 1970s, Taiwanese cinema thrived and its popularity spread throughout Southeast Asia. But that golden age came to an end with the influx of Hollywood pictures during the 1990s.

Just when almost everyone seemed to lose faith in the sector, director Wei Desheng's *Cape No. 7* rekindled hope for the industry in 2008. The movie generated box-office returns of \$18.3 million, a record for a Taiwanese film.

The film is about the unwav-

ering pursuit of music, dreams and love and provides a lavish presentation of the breathtaking scenery on the south side of the island.

Director Wei exquisitely portrayed a secret love set in the Japanese-occupied Taiwan of the 1940s. Unable to disclose his affection for a local woman before returning to Japan, a Japanese teacher wrote seven unforgettably passionate letters. Although the letters were only mailed 70 years later, they became the catalyst of a second inter-cultural love affair.

Cape No. 7 received strong attendance due to word-of-mouth. Since then, the island has produced new blockbusters with broader appeal.

"Previous Taiwanese directors were preoccupied with profound issues such as destiny and history — issues that seem distant to many," said film critic Steven Tu. The new generation focuses on the strength and frailty of the island's people and institutions — topics that strike a chord with the audience.

Monga, for example, which topped Taiwan's box office in 2010 and which was screened

at the Berlin film festival, portrays a brotherhood of five boys and touches on gang violence and bullying.

Another eye-catching film of 2011, *Night Market Hero*, depicts street vendors standing up against ruthless developers with the true story of a struggling gymnast-turned-coach.

Tu said he also found that the styles of emerging young directors have become more lighthearted. As an example, he cited director Chen Junlin's 2010 film *Au Revoir*, a comedy in which characters sometimes break into song.

Tu's comments were shared by Kim Ji-seok, the executive programmer of the Pusan International Film Festival, an international event for actors, directors and movie producers.

"Taiwanese filmmakers have established their own cinematic style, which is totally different from that of any other Asian country or region, and has spread around the world," Kim said.

"They talk about personal experience — the personal story of their protagonists." Kim attributed the trend to Taiwan's mix of ethnic and linguistic groups, including

ng hope with

formance *You Are the Apple of My Eye*, which topped box offices in Taiwan and Hong

movie is only part of a larger trend.

at home and abroad and winning awards at film festivals. The success is thanks to a new



as a surprising success in many Asian film markets.

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Taiwanese-speaking aboriginal underclass mired in poverty and alcoholism, a distinct society of Hakka people with their own language and a Chinese-speaking majority.

That cultural diversity inspires many of the young directors.

He said concern over aboriginal society has become a major theme, citing *Warriors of the Rainbow: Seediq Bale*, as an example, another hit film by Wei Desheng. The film was well received at last year's Venice Film Festival.

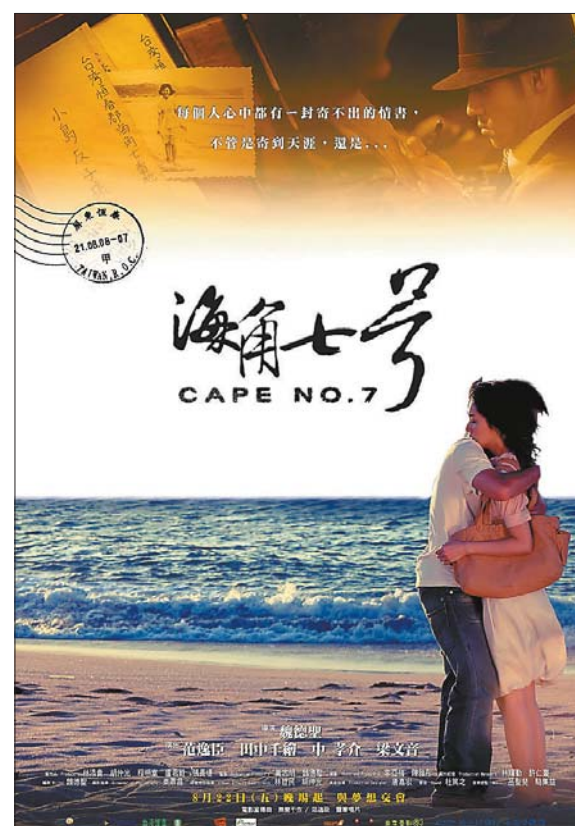
The \$25 million epic film

from Taiwan is about a rebellion by the island's aboriginal tribes against the Japanese occupation. It is based on a historical event in 1930, little known even among most Taiwanese, when Seediq tribal leaders launched a revolt during Japanese colonial rule. Japan's occupation began in 1895 and extended 50 years until Japan's defeat in World War II.

That Taiwanese films are getting so much attention is no accident: the island's young directors are telling the stories that viewers want to see.



Warriors of the Rainbow Seediq Bale. For Taiwan and aboriginal communities everywhere, Warriors of the Rainbow Seediq Bale is a historic release.



Cape No. 7 rekindled hope for the industry in 2008.



*Director Wei Desheng
Photo provided by
Zheng Weibo*

The dark side of Dickens

By Charles Zhu

Faithful to fact and accurate in its commentary, Claire Tomalin's superb *Charles Dickens: A Life* presents the man as he really was.

In 1836, Charles Dickens, then 24, married Catherine Hogarth and began to amass a fortune. He wrote simultaneously for four publishers and earned a bonus of £500 for *The Pickwick Papers*. Three years earlier, as a journalist, he had been producing sketches of urban life for a magazine called *The Monthly*.

This fantastic biography reveals Dickens' relationship with money. His father, John, had been imprisoned for debt in the Marshalsea.

His childhood and early adolescence were marked by a fall into abject poverty that denied him access to education and shamefully sent him to work in a blacking factory by the Hungerford Bridge at the age of 12. When he turned 15, he found work as a junior clerk in a law office, and at 24 he had been supporting himself for more than a decade.

As his fortune grew, so too did the number of his dependents. Dickens' large family and numerous friends and beneficiaries relied on him for financial support. His public readings in the 1860s brought him a wealth of payment and his second American tour (1867) earned him £20,000, or more than £1.4 million in today's currency.

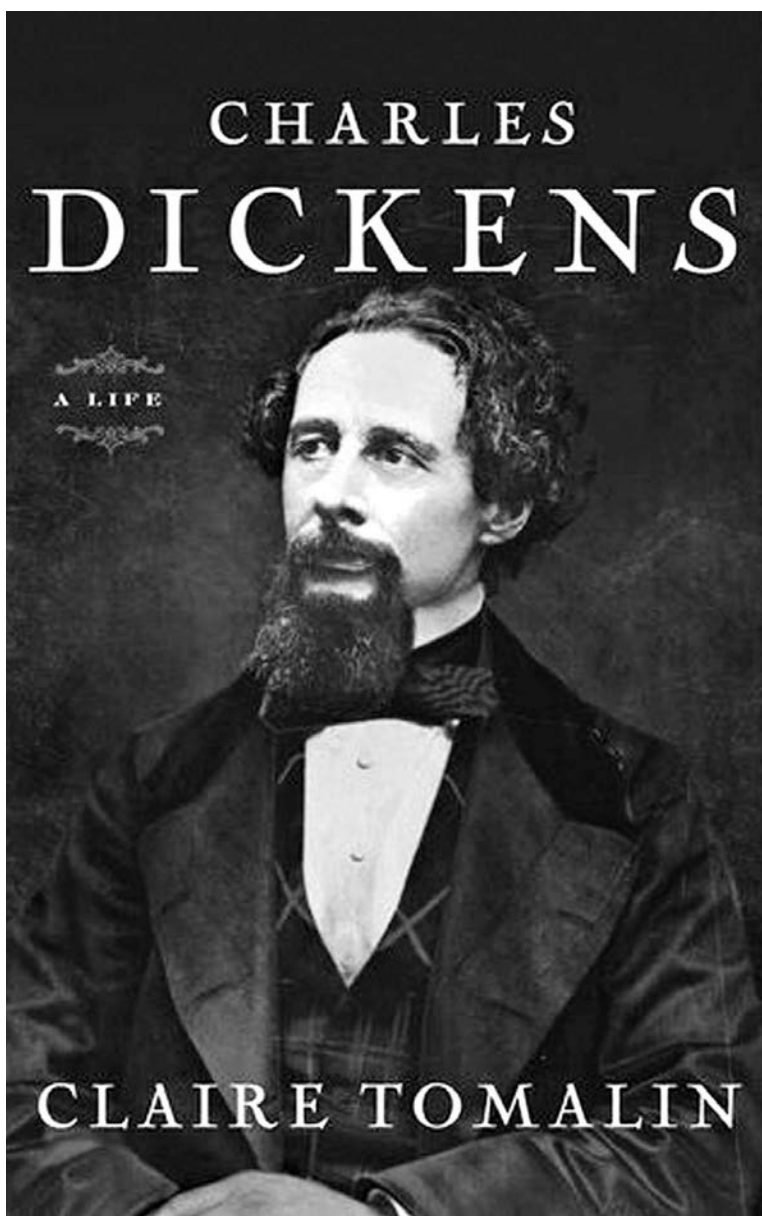
Nevertheless, Dickens led a pompous life and fell into heavy drinking, though he probably was not an alcoholic.

Understanding Dickens' history with money is essential to tearing away the famous mask. The great artist was very human, and Tomalin's biography offers a picture of a complex and exacting man. He was at once energetic and charming, charismatic and altruistic. Tomalin writes, "Dickens kept going by taking on too much." In 1838, he was writing *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby* at the same time.

He was also tormented, demanding and vindictive.

The biography gives a detailed account of Dickens' marriage and his long affair with the young actress Ellen Ternan. At the age of 45, Dickens fell for the 18-year-old Ternan. It was like Pip's love for Estella in *Great Expectations*, because she was "irresistible."

Dickens walked out on his unhappy marriage that produced 10 children and began an affair that brought out the worst in him. He separated himself from Catherine, treating her in the cruelest manner, and set up Ellen as his mistress in a house on the outskirts of London.



Charles Dickens: A Life

By Claire Tomalin, 576pp, Viking, £30

But the stress of relationships and work caused Dickens' health to take a turn, and by his early 50s premature aging had caused him severe gout, piles, neuralgia and, later, a minor stroke. George Eliot described him in 1870 as "dreadfully shattered."

Though dreadfully ill, he continued to embark on a punishing series of tours giving public readings of his novels. He was so weak he sometimes had to be helped onto and off the stage. While the tight schedule may have hastened his death, it was also a great satisfaction to his ego and his bank balance – "Think of it," he once said gleefully, "£190 a night [£14,000]."

He died in 1870 from a cerebral hemorrhage at the age of 58. His last novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, went unfinished.

Of the person, Fyodor Dostoyevsky in 1862 said, "He told me that all the good, simple people in his novels ... are what he wanted to have been, and his villains were what he was (or rather, what he

found in himself) – his cruelty, his attacks of causeless enmity towards those who were helpless and looked to him for comfort, his shrinking from those whom he ought to love.

"There were two people in him, he told me: one who feels as he ought to feel and one who feels the opposite. From the one who feels the opposite I make my evil characters, from the one who feels as a man ought to feel, I try to live my life."

Though Tomalin makes an accurate analysis of the novels, what is so valuable about this biography is the candid portrayal of the writer. Tomalin does not refrain from condemning Dickens whenever it is necessary, yet she writes with compassion.

She has achieved what she set out to – a faithful portrayal of Dickens as a complicated and often extremely difficult and demanding individual. The clearer picture of his person can help readers to better respect him and his great art.

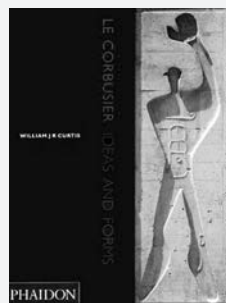
Timezone 8 book listing

Timezone 8 is a Hong Kong-based publisher, distributor and retailer of books on contemporary art, architecture, photography and design. This week, it recommends three upcoming titles to *Beijing Today* readers.

Le Corbusier: Ideas and Forms

By William J R Curtis, 240pp, Phaidon Press, \$35

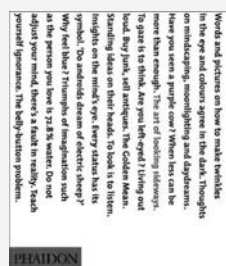
Le Corbusier (1887-1965) was a dominant force of 20th-century architecture; many of his forms have become archetypes of modernism. But Le Corbusier was also a social visionary and a writer of polemics, whose ideas have generated intense and partisan controversy. This book provides a comprehensive and objective survey that lends perspective to the architect's. Making full use of the Le Corbusier archive, the author documents individual projects in detail while linking the imaginative activities of the artist to his philosophy of life, his urban visions, his art and the cultural predicaments of his times.



The Art of Looking Sideways

By Alan Fletcher, 534pp, Phaidon Press, \$49.95

The art of ukiyo-e originated in the city of Edo (1603-1867, now Tokyo), when the political and military power of Japan was in the hands of the shogun. This book, with six essays, six plate sections and more than 600 illustrations, provides a perfect introduction to the art of the period. The paintings, scrolls and prints demonstrate not only the new urban pleasures of the theater, restaurant, tea house and geisha, but also Japan's love of nature and tradition. Professor Calza's accessible style provides a fascinating yet scholarly study of such masters as Hokusai, Hiroshige and Utamaro.



Topics of Our Time

By E.H. Gombrich, 223pp, Phaidon Press, 280 yuan

This collection of hard-hitting, highly readable essays reflects Gombrich's preoccupation with the central questions of value and tradition in our culture. Here he confronts some of the most urgent issues challenging today's students of art and civilization. His topics include some radical proposals for the reform of higher education, an attack on relativism and a plea for the conservation of our cities, alongside thought-provoking and engaging studies of the works of Oskar Kokoschka, Abram Games, Saul Steinberg and Henri Cartier-Bresson.



(By Zhang Dongya)

“

Stay vanward, stay poetic.

”

Poet of film



By Niu Chen

Tang Di is anything but mainstream.

The director seizes on sound and uses flowing images of his protagonists that defy any clean-cut storytelling. His free literary style is why the writer-turned-filmmaker is considered a pioneer of “poetic filmmaking.”

Last Saturday, Wenjin International Art Center screened several of his shorts. The sharp questions about his plots and themes that followed were reminiscent of *Lake Road*, Tanks' directorial debut that went on to win the prize for experimental film at The Second 54 International Youth Arts Festival.



Workers in the Tang's short film *Horsehair Workers*



Tang focuses migrant workers in the short *Maze*.

Tang Di was raised by his mother in a small village near Tangshan, Hebei Province. “Though she was illiterate, my mother always wanted me to be a writer or a doctor. It was hard to imagine, since I seldom read or kept a journal,” he said.

But Tang made a life-changing decision during his second year of high school: he dropped out.

“The atmosphere at school was depressing and I felt stressed,” he said. “I was a loner with few friends, and that great pressure made me feel like I would do something really desperate.”

During the months that followed, Tang made up his mind to become a writer. “When I first suggested it to my mother, she said I didn’t have the talent. I had to study hard on my own,” he said.

During the following five years, Tang read often and occasionally sent out his manuscripts. In 2006, Youth Literature published one of his short stories, marking the beginning of Tang’s literary career.

“I wrote movie reviews for two to three long years before making a film, and that helped shaped my aesthetics and gave me some ideas,” he said.

Lake Road, his first attempt at a short film, was shot together with *Arrival* and *Modified Tone* – what Tang calls the “Hometown Trilogy.” That first effort distinguished him from other filmmakers for his poetic approach to film.

The shorts included only two characters, a man and a woman, who walk, bicycle and stand by the lake. Without dialogue, the interplay between the two seems really

obscure, and one can hardly tell if there is a story.

But searching for a story is missing the point.

Tang said film is about having a dialogue with the viewers and drawing them into his lyricism. Plots, he argues, are unnecessary.

Each short presents only part of the story, denying viewers access to the big picture and forcing them to extrapolate and interpret. Viewers must sort out the nature of relationships using visual cues. While they may come to a different conclusion than Tang planned, it’s the process that matters, he says.

“I want my films to be open. I want my viewers to be active. A film with a clear conclusion is a failure,” Tang said.

Though it may not be obvious, Tang’s perception of society lies underneath every scene. *His Life is a Journey in Labyrinth* records the preparation of an art project by Huang Ruiyao. He was asked to shoot the film, but later veered away from the project to follow the migrant workers at the site. “As the program progressed, I felt less attached to the project and more connected to those workers,” he said.

His short films do not offer grand themes but express his feelings and emotions. Some, such as *Lake Road* and *Horsehair Workers*, wallow in nostalgia and lament the disappearance of fine craftsmanship.

Horsehair Workers records scenes of three horsehair workers who work in a dark room and speak in a regional dialect. Both lighting and speech take a back seat to the sound of horsehair being processed. Tang said he grew up with

the unpleasant sound, and in the film pushes it to the extreme so no viewer can forget it.

But most viewers prefer hard-hitting and fast-paced documentaries to his obtuse monologues.

“While I respect those who have courage to confront the seamy side of society, my preference for a soft-landing does not mean I lack a viewpoint,” Tang said.

His works has been published in several domestic literary magazines. He is planning to release a new 90-minute film later this year.



Lake Road, without dialogue, is too obscure for many viewers.

Photos provided by Tang Di

Shopping for spring and Valentine's



Zhao Quan making papercutting

Window flowers for the winter sunshine



Chinese papercutting from Zhao Quan

Photos by Guo Ping

By Annie Wei

Chinese papercutting is a folk art originally displayed in windows, thus its other name, "window flowers." In Inner Mongolia and the provinces of Hebei and Shanxi, especially in the rural areas, it's a tradition to put papercuttings on windows during Chinese New Year.

Windows in rural houses are small, the perfect size for paper cuttings to be pasted over them. On sunny days, the light streaming through the window flowers can be vivid and colorful, especially if the window flower is brightly colored, rich and gaudy.

Window flowers are cut from a special kind of paper called *xuan* paper, known for being soft and finely textured. They are carefully colored.

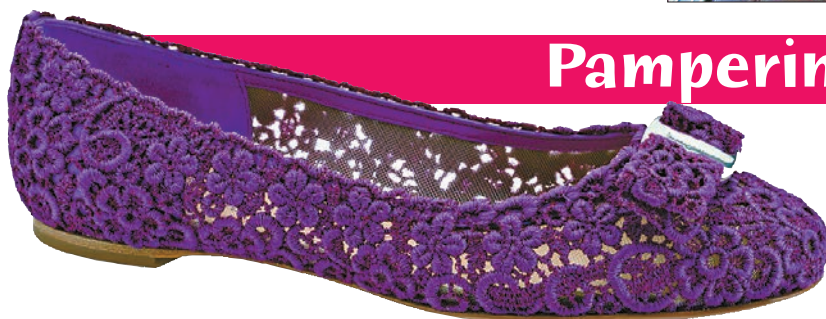
One can try pasting them on lamp covers or glass doors to create a truly unique aesthetic.

Zhao Quan, 60, from Weixian County, Hebei Province has been making window flowers his entire life. A set of 12 handcrafted window flowers of Chinese horoscopes costs only 35 yuan.

How to purchase from Zhao Quan

Where: 13 Xiqianxiang, Guanxi Jie, Weizhou County, Weixian, Hebei Province

Tel: 0313-7217 213



Salvatore Ferragamo, 4,950 yuan

Pampering loved ones

Many people think Valentine's Day has become too commercial and refuse to celebrate it. But for those who feel like it's the perfect holiday for some personal pampering, here are some international brands' latest products for this spring.

Shin-Kong Plaza

You can find international brands like Salvatore Ferragamo and Bally.

Where: 87 Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am - 10 pm
Tel: 6530 5888

The Village North

You can find brands like Diesel, Marni and Longchamp.

Where: 19 Sanlitun Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am - 8 pm
Tel: 6417 6110



Piquadros 2012, price to be determined

CHP Photos



Bally handbag - true love, 3,990 to 4,390 yuan



Diesel Lovedose, price TBD



I love Sasatinnie nail polish, price TBD

New eateries with competitive prices

By Annie Wei

With more diners complaining of increasing food prices, some new restaurants and eateries are trying new strategies to cut in the market – offering delicious food at more competitive prices.



Cakes start from 25 yuan.

CFP Photos



You can find fresh gluten-free pastries at The Sweet Spot.

Gluten-free bakery now open

By Annie Wei

The majority of Chinese may be unaware of what “gluten-free” means. But for people with celiac, an allergy to protein gluten, found most commonly in wheat, it’s a must.

A newly opened bakery store, The Sweet Spot under Guomao shopping mall, offers not only delicious pastries and coffee at competitive prices, but also gluten-free cakes.

Fresh pastries start at 16 yuan; a piece of cake costs 25 yuan; Americano coffee and espressos start at 18 yuan, cappuccino at 22 yuan; six macaroons go for 45 yuan.

The spot is small yet functional, with only three tables. Due to its convenient location, it’s quickly become a popular spot for people



Six macaroons cost 45 yuan.

who work in the surrounding offices to quickly grab a snack, such as yogurt with plum and flakes (16 yuan), or coffee and fresh juice (22 yuan).

The bakery is run by China World Hotel, and the servers are attentive.

For home delivery gluten-free pies and cakes, you can place an order from piehouse.com.cn,

which provides American home-style pies and delicious cakes made of natural ingredients.

The Sweet Spot

Where: Opposite the supermarket, underground floor, Guomao Shopping Mall, 1 Jianguomen, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

Tel: 6505 2288

Old Beijing home-style restaurant goes trendy

By Annie Wei

Xiaodiao Litang, a private kitchen restaurant, is known for inexpensive Old Beijing cuisine. Even its name conveys its homeliness.

Xiaodiao means a small pot, while litang is a popular traditional soup made with pears.

The restaurant opened in Tuanjiehu at the end of last year and has become a popular spot for office workers and young diners.

The must-have is the litang, pear soup, which sells at 4 yuan per diao – old slang for “pot.” Each pot fills four small glasses. The soup is boiled in water with iced sugar. It tastes light, sweet and delicious, and has been a popular drink for centuries, as it’s reputed to soothe dryness.

The litang is served in a delicate two-layer bronze pot designed by the restaurant. It’s crafted in such a way to keep the soup warm for a long time.

Most dishes range from 22 to 38 yuan, with snacks around 10



Fried pork liver, 36 yuan
Photos by Zhao Baoling

yuan. The most expensive dish is meat seasoned with soy sauce and pancakes (108 yuan), which comes with a set of pancakes, *hecai* (fried leeks, mung bean sprouts and eggs) and seasoned lamb. Wrap the lamb and *hecai* in the pancake and eat as you would Peking duck.

Other recommended dishes include braised lamb chops with sour cucumber soup (36 yuan). The serving is big, but there’s not much lamb or cucumber in the soup. The lemon slices also give the soup a fresh kick.

Vegetables cost 12 to 18 yuan. The bean cake (10 yuan) is a favorite, and

the cheese fish (10 yuan) tastes like pudding, delicious with syrup.

Fried pork liver (36 yuan) is a traditional Beijing dish, simply fried pork liver with soy sauce and finished with shallots. It is tasty but a bit too salty.

The restaurant’s signature rice (28 yuan for two) is also recommended. It comes with lots of ingredients, including quail egg, cabbage, mushroom and squid.

The restaurant is quite cozy and warm, decorated with impressions of old Beijing hutong houses.

The waitresses and waiters are young and friendly. The only downside is that the restaurant is usually so busy that some dishes take a long time to prepare. When a hot dish is served, the plate remains icy cold.

Xiaodiao Litang

Where: Jia 14 (the small alley opposite the Beijing Youth Daily building), Baijiazhuang Dong Li, Chaoyang District

Open: 11 am – 9 pm

Tel: 6582 1348



Pear soup, 4 yuan

Dinning

The perfect Valentine's Day

Begin your passionate night with an arousing cocktail or glass of champagne at Zeta Bar. The celebration will mark an unforgettable chapter in your love story.

Where: Zeta Bar, Hilton Beijing, 1 Dongfang Lu, Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: February 14

Cost: 99 per couple (cocktails with sweets); 199 yuan per couple (champagne cocktails with sweets) (15 percent gratuity)



V-Day candlelight dinner at Sunworld

Join us for a night of romance, live music, fine wine and all things lovely and divine on Valentine's Day at Dynasty Plaza. Come with your beloved and enjoy an unforgettable four-course candlelight dinner.

When: February 14

Where: Dynasty Plaza, 50 Wangfujing Dajie

Cost: Package A is 588 yuan per couple and includes dinner, roses and chocolates; Package B is 1,288 yuan per couple and includes dinner, a one-night stay and breakfast

Tel: 5816 8888 ext. 8222 for reservation

Event



Heyrobics comes to CBD

Join Beijing's happiest group exercise session in the central business district.

From February 13, get sweaty doing Heyrobics each Monday at the Beijing City International School in Shuangjing. All you need to bring is training clothes and 20 yuan.

The exercise program, created in Sweden in the 1970s, is the latest of Beijing's exercise crazes. Pumping beats, full-body exercise, drinks and energetic instructors – Heyrobics has it all.

Heyrobics is performed in parks and on rooftops in the summer, and indoors during the colder months. It's not hard to spot the big groups performing easy motions and sporting big smiles – or their enthusiastic Swede instructors wearing pink shorts!

When: February 13, 6:45-7:45 pm

Cost: 20 yuan per session

Website: heyrobics.com

Hotel



Crowne Plaza at U-Town names new manager

David Travers has been appointed the general manager of Crowne Plaza Beijing Chaoyang U-Town and area general manager of all Crowne Plaza Hotels in Beijing.

Travers has many years of experience in the hospitality industry and has worked for 30 years with Intercontinental Hotel Group (IHG). Before this appointment, Travers was the general manager of Crowne Plaza Melbourne and regional general manager for IHG in Victoria, South Australia and Western Aus-

tralia. Before that, he was the general manager of InterContinental Shanghai Pudong and regional general manager IHG-Shanghai.

Travers will be in charge of operation and management at the Crowne Plaza Beijing U-Town with a goal of consolidating the hotel's outstanding reputation in the capital.

Marriott microblogs to engage with Chinese travelers

Marriott Rewards, the award-winning loyalty program of Marriott International, announced a weekly promotional campaign that ends March 10 on its Sina Weibo microblog.

Designed to engage Chinese members and drive new membership, the promotion allows members to win prizes by blogging about how they would use their prizes with their friends.

The campaign, on @marriottrewardsshare, features the following attractive weekly prizes for winners:

Marriott Rewards members in China are encouraged to participate by inviting five friends to share the prize and blog about how they will enjoy the prize with these friends. Winners are selected based on the number of "votes" and the creativeness of the blog.

One voter will win a Free Night Certificate each day during the promotion period.

Website:

weibo.com/marriottrewardsshare



Who is Beijing's 'Celebrity Tosser'?

Get in training for Shrove Tuesday and join Hilton Beijing's third annual Pancake Race. This year, Hilton Beijing is gathering some of Beijing's "Celebrity Foodies" to share in the chance to win the trophy for being Beijing's finest pancake tosser.

Where: Hilton Beijing, 1 Dongfang Lu, Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: February 21

Cost: Free admission for competitors and spectators; freshly made pancakes priced 10 yuan; beers 25 yuan; after party to be held in Zeta Bar (no cover charge)

Tel: 5865 5125 to participate in the race (limit 20 persons)

(By Jackie Zhang)



Fri, Feb. 10

Nightlife Immanu EI China tour

Immanu EI is a Swedish post-rock band whose style combines post-rock, ambient, indie rock and experimental music. Founded in 2004, the band was invited to perform in the Hultsfred Rookie Festival the following year,

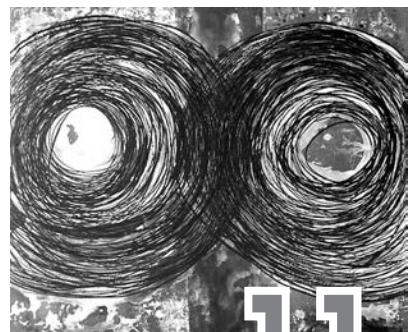
one of the most important music festivals in the local indie music scene. The band released two albums, *They'll Come*, *They Come* and *Moen*, in 2007 and 2009 respectively, helping Immanu EI become an influential Scandinavian outfit.

Where: MAO Livehouse, 111 Gulou Dongdajie, Dongcheng District.

When: 8:30-11:30 pm

Admission: 60 yuan pre-sale, 80 yuan at the door

Tel: 13730868213



Sat, Feb. 11

Exhibition Splendid with no regrets

Still coping with modern urban landscape mutations, Fortunée Noel's new works depict a frenetic Beijing juggling with cinder blocks and girders.

The new set of works proposed at the Babu Space gallery mainly tries to recreate the energy inherent to this aesthetic transformation guided by desire as well as necessity. Consequences are no pre-text for interrogation this time.

Old hutong are an important part of Noel's works. But this time, gold and silver pigments are dominant. Submitted to an irrepressible evolution, old Beijing appears more than ever like a mummy in a sarcophagus.

This exhibition is part of a series of events marking the 20th anniversary of China-Israel diplomatic relations.

Where: N2-40, Sanlitun Village North, Chaoyang District

When: 6 pm (opening); until March 5.

Admission: Free

Tel: 6415 8616

Nightlife I Know Ta Is Coming

Zhong Lifeng is the lead singer of Borges. His music is filled with humanity and emotion, aiming to touch the audience's soul. The concert is his chance to tell stories through songs and share experiences about music and life.

Where: 7 Mianhua Hutong, Jiaokou-dao Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District.

When: 8:30-11 pm

Admission: 80 yuan pre-sale, 100 yuan at the door

Tel: 6401 5269

Nightlife The Beijing Beatles

The Beijing Beatles will cover the fab four's greatest hits, organized under two themes. The first is "The Beatles," covering 1962 to 1966. "All you need is love" is the other theme, covering songs from 1967 to 1970. The band will dress as characters from the *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album cover.

Where: V.A. Bar, 13 Wudaoying Hutong, Dongcheng District

When: 10 pm - 1 am

Admission: 30 yuan

Tel: 5844 3638

Culture Salon A Tale of Carver, finding the real Raymond Carver

Raymond Carver was one of the most important American writers of the second half of the 20th century despite never publishing a novel. The book *Raymond Carver, A Writer's Life* is a biography by Carol Sklenicka. It took her 10 years to research all of Carver's works and conduct the relevant interviews. Sklenicka tried to piece together Carver's life to find the man behind the works.

The Salon will invite Ge Fei, a professor at Tsinghua University, and

Sun, Feb. 12

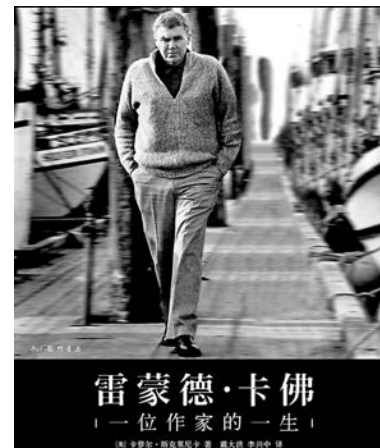
Tang Wei, a Carver fan, to talk about the famous writer and share their experiences while reading Sklenicka's acclaimed biography.

Where: One Way Street Library, Solana, 6 Chaoyang Gongyuan Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 2-4 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 5905 6937



Mon, Feb. 13

Movie The Silence of the Sea

Set during World War II, due to France's occupation by Germany, an old French man and his niece have to live with a German officer. This is a story of



friendship and love that transcends the politics of the age.

The Silence of the Sea was directed by Pierre Boutron, reflecting his thinking about war and human nature. The film resonated with European audiences and won widespread acclaim

Where: French Cultural Center, 18 Gongti Xi Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 7:30-9:30 pm

Admission: 20 yuan, 10 yuan for students

Drama Time Carnival

What if two people in love aren't allowed to be together until 10 years later? *Time Carnival* tells the story of a couple in a long-distance relationship - a visual feast for Valentine's Day. The couple struggles with the pursuit of true love and, in the process, learn more about themselves.

Where: Trojan House, Art Center, 22 Pingguo Shequ (Pingod Community), Baiziwan Lu, Chaoyang District.

When: 7:30 pm

Admission: 50-400 yuan

Tel: 5876 0611

Wed, Feb. 14

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Tue, Feb. 15

Drama Beijing I Love You

Five famous directors - Yang Yazhou, Qiu Ye, Zhang Yadong, Luo Kang and Chen Yiming - tell five love stories based on Beijing's subway. Five special perspectives will give viewers a new outlook on love and their lovers.

Where: CHE Theater, Nine Theater, 17 Jintai Xili, Chaoyang District.

When: Daily until March 3, 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-680 yuan

Tel: 4008 802 880

Thu, Feb. 16

Exhibition Lüxiao Reactor

Lüxiao is an open group for artists, providing opportunities for amateurs who want to share their works.

This exhibition will feature illustrations from 18 local indie illustrators, including Cai Zebin and Daguoli.

Where: Qinggongguan, 23 Chaibang Hutong, Andingmen Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: Daily until February 29, 2-6 pm

Admission: Free



(By Zhang Yuting)

Touring China's winter splendors

By Zhang Dongya

Some hot destinations during summertime, such as Lhasa in Tibet and Kanas in Xinjiang, are seeing their winter tourism numbers increase.

Sure, more people are opting to avoid the peak tourism season, but it's also because some places offer stunning winter views. Here are some examples.



A warmer winter in Kanas

Kanas Scenic Spot in north Xinjiang is famous for its beautiful scenery during the summer, so for a long time, people avoided visiting during the winter. But then tourists wised up. Last year, for the first time, Kanas charged admission during the winter due to an upsurge in visitors.

Kanas is usually bitterly cold, with temperatures dipping to -40 C, along with big snowfalls that can reach thigh-deep.

But it's been warmer this winter, with the lowest temperature only hitting -25 C. Be warned that it's still not warm, with the highs only reaching -10 C, but there's been 20 percent less snow this year.

Hemu Village is highly recommended. Dubbed one of the top 10 most beautiful villages in the country, it's attracted many photographers who take pictures of its every corner. Home inns, restaurants and small bistros add to the village's charm.

All houses are built with wood, so the village smells like a forest. The yellow cottages turn snow white during the winter, adding a layer of cream. During the day it is very tranquil, almost like no one is around. Around dinnertime, smoke rises from kitchen chimneys in every household, offering a picture of hamlet life.

Kanas Scenic Spot hosted folk performances during Spring Festival. People in ethnic costumes showed off their skills in archery and horse racing.

Kanas prefecture has a large pop-

ulation of Kazakhs. Visit a Tuvan family, where they will serve local specialties. During the winter, some home tours are suspended, but you can still visit locals. It's common to see women embroidering and weaving carpets and rugs.

Visitors can also ski in Kanas. Locals use old-fashioned wooden ski board that were made by nomads using fir and horsehair. If you're lucky, you will see a traditional ski race.

Kanas Scenic Spot

Getting there: Fly to Urumchi. One can bus to Kanas from there, or fly to Altay and bus from there. Arriving in Kanas, take an SUV or horse-drawn sleigh to the villages.

Open: 9 am - 2 pm, 4-7 pm, Monday - Friday; 10 am - 3 pm on weekends

Tel: 0999-8028 697

Admission: 230 yuan in summer, 150 yuan in winter (October 10 - May 10)

Note: Be sure to wear several layers of clothing.

A dry and real Lhasa

It's low season for Lhasa from November to April. The temperatures are low and the air is dry, but if you visit now, you'll get the opportunity to see a more real Tibet.

There's a big temperature difference in the day and night. Staying in Lhasa, dubbed "City of Sunshine," you'll feel warm even now. Surrounding areas, however, are bitterly cold, with piercing winds.

The good news is you'll get to see Potala Palace in all its glory, without heads blocking your view. You can spend an entire afternoon investigating temples and monasteries like Drepung Monastery and Tashilhunpo Monastery.

Lhasa is an ideal place to take life at a slow pace. Walking into a teahouse and ordering a cup of local sweet tea, you can enjoy the sunshine from the window while chatting with locals. Local dishes like Tibetan baozi are a delight.

The square in front of Jokhang Temple is grander at this time of year than any other.

For photo enthusiasts, there are some scenes that you can only catch during this time of year. Now's the best time to view Namcha Barwa and also a great time to glimpse Mount Everest.

This year, the Tibetan New Year is a month after Spring Festival, so visitors get to see how Tibetans celebrate this special occasion.

Note: It's much cheaper to go to Tibet during the winter, with air tickets and lodging priced as much as 50 percent less. Admission prices are also discounted.

Other Destinations

Jiuzhaigou Valley

This scenic spot has closed many parts for the winter, but there are still several to explore. The Pearl Shoal Waterfall becomes an ice falls during the winter, and the color is rare blue. It's like a natural ice sculpture when viewed with the frozen lakes. There are also interesting folk customs related to Spring Festival in the surrounding villages. You can also ride a horse to Muni Valley, where the Zhaga Waterfall and Erdahai Lake are located. The waterfall is frozen like a giant animal, as is the lake below.

Open: 6:30 am - 6 pm

Tel: 0837-7739 529

Admission: 220 yuan

Arxan

This is a small city with thousands of people located on the border of Inner Mongolia. The city is tranquil during wintertime. With snow, the wooden houses feel like they belong in Northern Europe. There are two big ski resorts in Arxan, with a hot spring at the foot of the mountain. Beside the city is Bailang (white wolf) folk village, where visitors can experience local activities: chopping wood, playing ice gyro and watching the folk dance yangko.



Visiting Lhasa in the winter, you can slow down and see a more real Tibet.

CFP Photos